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THE FUTURE OF DRINKING

BY GILBERT SELDES

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THE FUTURE OF
DRINKING

THE FUTURE OF DRINKING LIES IN THE HANDS OF THE DRINKERS

The Future of DRINKING

By
GILBERT SELDES

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drawings by
don herold

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A plague on both your houses.

ROMEO AND JULIET

Eryximachus said: What is this, Alcibiades? Are we to have neither conversation nor singing over our cups; but simply to drink as if we were thirsty?

PLATO: SYMPOSIUM

FOREWORD

THE subject of the following pages is the future of drinking, not the future of prohibition. The reader who wishes to find assurance that the Eighteenth Amendment will be immediately repealed and the reader who looks for a brilliant solution to the problem of law enforcement will be equally disappointed. What is said of the pleasures of drinking will irritate the professional drys and the sour notes in the hymn to drunkenness will annoy the professional drunkards. The book is therefore addressed to the unterrified ones who do not object to un-seriousness in the treatment of

the noble experiment and to those thrice pock-marked and scarified blades invoked by Rabelais, who are interested in drinking — and know when and how to drink.

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THE FUTURE OF
DRINKING

CHAPTER I

POISON IS PERSONAL

Some time ago a gentleman busy with the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment proposed to put to death all the drinkers in the United States. It was the first intelligent suggestion, the first mature and unsentimental proposal made since Prohibition came into being; subsequent events have proved that this gentleman, whose very name is forgotten,[1] was actually giving voice to the aspirations of thousands of ardent drys who are never happier than in the contemplation of the death, "at the hands of person or persons unknown", of

[1] It shouldn't be.

any one caught on the highways habitually used by bootleggers. In the nature of things, these deaths are infrequent, and the shotgun, being even less a respecter of persons than the revenue agents, occasionally put to death a non-drinker, with deplorable results.[1]

The intelligence of the first method lay in this: that it provided a definite and inevitable death for all the drinkers and at the same time it did not imperil the life of a single abstainer. According to the established morality of America, the wages of sin is death; according to the even higher morality of Prohibition, drinking

[1] I regret, as much as any one, the departure from rigid impartiality which is so obvious in this paragraph. The reader who is not so tender-minded as I am, and holds a warm spot in his heart for murder, will find that a balance is struck in some of the following pages.

is a sin darker than murder, blasphemy, and theft. So long, then, as the drinker escaped the penalty of his sin, he made a mock of established morality; it was necessary to close the gap between morals and fact and this could only be done by making drinking synonymous with death.

Chemistry gave aid. It appears that the government of the United States possesses a poison, subtle and incomparably lethal, which can be instilled into those vast quantities of alcohol which are so easily abstracted from government warehouses and so quickly turned into gin, and this poison has two qualities which others lack: it cannot be detected by taste and it is wholly ineradicable. Once it gets into alcohol, it stays there until it kills the drinker, and no amount of cooking or re-distilling will

avail. In its calm and impersonal movements, Science, which has created antitoxin for the diseases of mankind, has reached its height in the preparation of the ideal poison.

Nothing came of this proposal. Officially, at least, the American Government has refrained from poisoning its people. A wild, utterly sentimental outcry about "the government in murder" frightened the clear thinkers of the Prohibition unit and the more dubious euthanasia of the shotgun took the place of the desirable chemical which gave assurance that those who drank, all of them, and none other, would die. The proposer of lethal alcohol was probably transferred and nothing more was said of the single realistic and logical solution of the problem of Prohibition, the only one which brought the problem down from the

CHEMISTRY GAVE AID TO PROHIBITION

realm of fantasy and put it with every cocktail into the hands of the average drinking man. Poison, at least, is personal.

Perhaps I exaggerate. It seems to me that from time to time another suggestion has been made, usually in letters to the editor. I find it again, seriously considered by Mark Sullivan and offered for the serious consideration of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement, in the statement of Mr. Wade H. Ellis:

"Undoubtedly it would be a good thing for the country, morally, physiologically, and financially, if the use of intoxicating liquors was stopped by everybody by common consent."

That, also, is personal. The idea of poison has the added advantage of being practical.

A universal swearing-off was the ideal of the old temperance movements in America before they entered politics, and these movements, as emotional as religious revivals, failed.

The way to stop drinking is to stop drinking. The idealists think that the second "stop" means "cease"; the practical men are sure that it means "prevent." Convert the drinker — or kill him.

Conversion — which is the death of sin — and murder — the death of the sinner — are directed to the individual. The Eighteenth Amendment is personal enough in effect; but the laws passed to enforce the Amendment, the officers appointed to enforce the enforcing acts, the lobbies and societies active to assist or hinder the officers enforcing the acts to enforce

THE WAY TO STOP DRINKING IS TO STOP IT

the Amendment, are singularly impersonal. Bootlegging, as a business closely associated with murder, is also personal. Yet the prizes for plans to put an end to bootlegging are won by those who can think of drink without thinking of the drinker, and who can reduce to equations and statistics the impulse which sends men and women into shadowy cellars to find out whether the Martinis are as bad as they were two weeks ago.

This discrepancy between the private and the official aspects of prohibition points to a defect in the Amendment itself.[1] The Amend-

[1] I know that it is wrong to question any part of the Constitution; but as I do not challenge the righteousness of the Amendment and am only zealous to point out how it could be made more logical and at least 100% effective, I hope to be spared the imputation of anti-Americanism.

ment is intended to put an end to the *consumption* of intoxicants; yet verbally it is directed only against the *distribution*. It is illegal to import liquor for any purpose, but in actual practice it is not illegal to manufacture alcohol if you promptly pour it into the sewer. In an age of chain stores, go-getting salesmen, high-pressure merchandising schemes, when the cost of making an article may be a third or a tenth of the cost of distributing it, the Prohibiting Fathers were misled and the vision of a non-drinking nation was so clear and dazzling in the distance that the object in the immediate foreground was thrown out of focus. They were passing sumptuary legislation and forgetting the consumer.

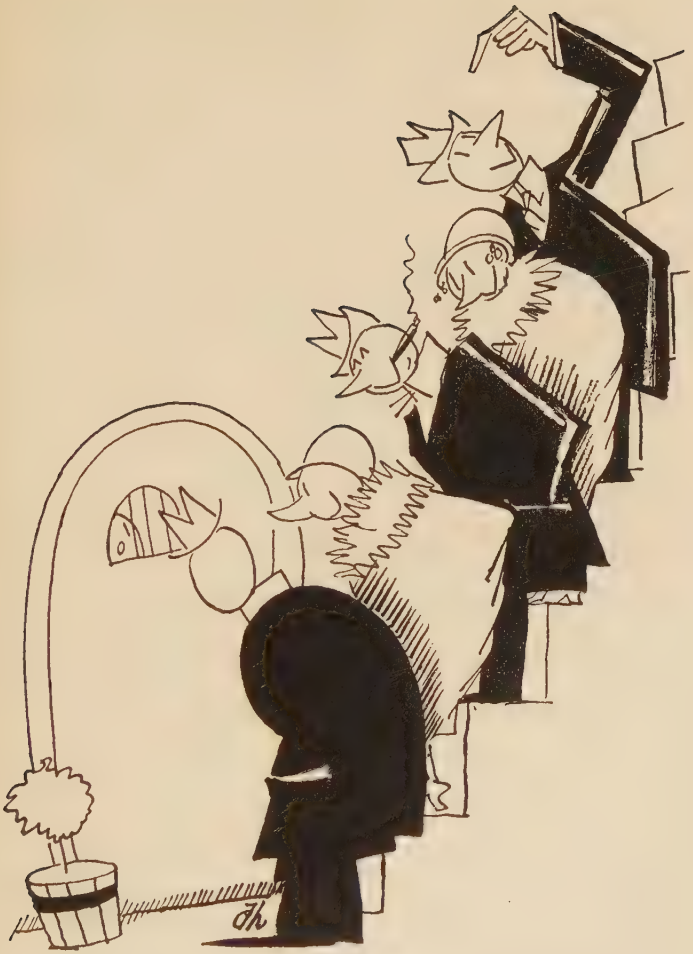
The number of the Amendment suggests the century to which its purpose belongs and

the twentieth-century mechanism of the supporting laws refuses to function, just as a modern motor would refuse to function in a carriage of Revolutionary times. In Connecticut, in colonial days, no person whose estate was less than two hundred pounds was permitted to wear "gold or silver lace or any lace above two shillings a yard." There was no nonsense about the crime of selling lace to such a person; the crime was committed by the wearer. In the days between Cato the Censor and Sulla the Proscriber, the Romans enjoyed a law limiting the sums to be spent on entertainment "and *made the guests as well as the givers* of entertainments at which the law was violated liable to the penalties." (Italics mine. The style betrays the Britannica.)

Disguised as a social law, the Amendment

failed to make drinking itself a crime and the supporting legislatures have failed to supply what the Amendment lacks. The logic of the omission is debatable; the framers of the Amendment seemed to think that the people "would not stand" a positive veto on drinking, but would stand a veto on everything which made drinking possible. They were, in fact, legalists and their law seems to be legally perfect. It breaks down in practice because drinkers are not interested in the law.

The logical people are those who, despite the law, consider drinking itself a crime and are furious at the thought of an American drinking in Paris or a British Ambassador drinking on the British soil of his Embassy in Washington. The sanction of custom gives a law its power and determines the extent of its



THE IMPULSE WHICH SENDS MEN AND WOMEN INTO SHADOWY CELLARS

application, and so long as the law stands on the books, the drys are justified in their efforts to make it logically sound. The ultimate objective is to establish a penalty for drinking. Why should the bootlegger take all the risk?

The future of drinking may, therefore, be quite simple. If law or custom makes drinking a crime,[1] the question becomes social, national, economic — anything but personal. So long as drinking itself remains innocent, its future depends on the drinker; it is as personal as taste or happiness or a headache.

This is almost exactly what the creators of

[1] Since this book was written, the effort to make the purchase of liquor a crime has been multiplied. It indicates either a lack of faith in the present acts or a consciousness of growing power in the minds of the drys.

the Amendment neither wanted nor expected, and one stops to admire the profound irony of the situation. I am speaking not of the legislators who framed or voted for the Amendment and the Volstead Act, but of the guileful and tireless enthusiasts who promoted both. They were the craftiest of politicians, the masters of propaganda, the most inspired of zealots; they calculated every force but one. That one, oddly enough, is the temper of the American people, of which the drys took so low a view that in comparison the mythical Americans of Sinclair Lewis and Mencken are giants of probity, courage, and intellectual strength. The average preacher of prohibition would call Babbitt and the *homo americanus boobiens* gross travesties of our national type; he would, in a fervor of patriotism and worship, deny that the

industrial age makes robots of any red-blooded American; yet the American on whom he proposed to impose the system of prohibition was lower than a Babbitt or a robot or a boob: he was a slave. What is worse — for the reformer — he was a myth.

The assumption behind the prohibitory laws was that they would be obeyed. The dry imagined that the American was so commercialized that a check on distribution would prevent him from getting liquor; that the American was so industrialized, so accustomed to the ready-made, put-up-in-packages, bottled goods, that he would not have the skill or the energy to fall to his own manufacture; that the factory had utterly destroyed the home-and-cottage system of making desired goods; and finally, that the American was so

docile that he would obey a law rather than run the risk of disrupting his social and industrial life by disobedience.

Not since the Kaiser and his gang imagined that England would be attacked by Ireland and deserted by the Dominions has a greater misconception of a nation's character been recorded. The Prohibitionists guessed wrong in every detail and the sum of their error is that the American people have not become utterly depersonalized by commerce and industry and a strong Federal Government. The process of standardization which is always noted by enemies of the power age, and which Stuart Chase has neatly annihilated,[1] stopped

[1] In "Men and Machines", one of those rare books which manage to be entertaining and important at the same time.

short of conquering the American, and no two mixers of cocktails to-day agree on ingredients, proportions, or any of the more recondite points of making and serving drinks.

I do not say that Prohibition was undesirable or its laws unjust. The point worth noting is only that the assumption — ultimate obedience — was unjustifiable and betrayed a mean conception of the American character. Because the law undermined the commerce and the industry of liquor, the drys, believing that all Americans are money-mad, imagined that the law undermined liquor itself. The long propaganda proving that drinking was wasteful, "uneconomic", had persuaded the heads of factories and mills, but the money-grubbing, utterly materialistic American had somehow refused to be swayed by economic motives.

The drys had invented an image as unreal as the "economic man" of the Manchester theorists and the simple average man rose to confound them.[1] At a definite moment in their history, the temperance workers turned from the drunkard, with whom they had always been on human terms, to the drink (of which, on principle they knew nothing). The early temperance societies embraced the (reformed) drunkard and set him to describing the terrors of his deliriums; the later ones, the prohibitionists, circulated statistics and manipulated politicians. Out of this change was born the misconception of the American people which is embodied in the Amendment; and so far,

[1] The wets are in the process of inventing another image, the sacred drunkard, and who will destroy that idol, I cannot guess.

THE EARLY TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES EMBRACE THE (REFORMED) DRUNKARD AND SET HIM TO DESCRIBING THE TERRORS OF HIS DELIRIUM

every profound discussion of Prohibition has been vitiated, made slightly academic, by continuing the error. Only in private, and in the writings of a small number of sarcastic observers, has the simple truth come out: that the future of drinking lies in the hands of the drinkers.

Question: What about the Amendment? Will it be repealed, nullified, modified, enforced, forgotten?

Answer: The present inquiry is into the future of drinking, not into the future of prohibition.

However, one needn't be surly. I do not know the answer to the questions. My assumption is that the law will remain in the Constitution

and that while certain modifications in the means of enforcement may proceed from Acts of Congress and like sources, the decisive change in the law will come through changing habits, the force of custom. The reader will perceive the vicious circle: the Amendment, in brief, will be affected by the drinking it affects.

We have no precise parallel, but we have other Amendments and laws which also touch upon the individual, and when we look carefully upon their workings, we find a reasonable general rule: laws are respected or evaded *on their own ground,* almost one might say, by disregarded functions of their own character. The law, for instance, establishing a Federal income tax, affects the individual financially. The small individual (the home-brewer of income tax reports) evades the law painfully

by concealing part of his income, and it becomes a test of skill between him and the government; with stoppage at the source, check-ups of salary rolls, and the like, the government is eventually the winner and falsification of reports becomes a trivial misdemeanor, ineffective because it fails to meet finance on the grounds of finance. The individuals and corporations effectively evading the law are not disobeying the law, but defeating its object. They discover non-taxable securities, they issue stock instead of paying dividends, they form new corporations to drain off excess profits, they discover defects in the law or inflame the conscience of the Treasury and get vast sums restored to them — they meet fire with fire.

Similarly, the Anti-Trust Law affects the structure of business and business has changed

its structure to meet it, so that the headlines, and not the United States Treasury, rejoiced in the $39,000,000 fine which the Standard Oil Company was, somehow, not compelled to pay; and we have mergers instead of trusts to watch over our industrial stability. The law compelling reapportionment of representatives on the basis of each new census is a political law and was forgotten in a series of political maneuvers, and the Amendment which was meant to give the southern Negro the vote is a social law and was properly nullified by the appeal to social standing in the grandfather clause.

The Eighteenth Amendment is equivocal. It embodies social, moral, and economic factors; but its natural ground is the one on which it

meets the individual. It has had social, economic, and moral consequences and those have all been canvassed; but the entire nature of the problem will change with the other neglected changes — in personal habits, in taste.

New drinks, new ways of drinking, new ideals of drinking, are coming into existence. They are definite enough to give some clue to the future.

CHAPTER II

O PIONEERS!

In England, it appears, there is a thing which its enemies call "the Cocoa Press." Mr. Chesterton and his followers sing the praises of ale and good beer and the rolling English drunkard who made the rolling English road so much more attractive than the straight logical *routes nationales* of the French; and when they have to put a name on the enemy of good drinking, they call it the Cocoa Press. It is true that the *London Daily News*, a Liberal paper opposed to the interests of the brewers and the distillers, is, or was, owned by the Cadburys, and Cadbury makes cocoa.

The implication is clear: that the manufacturers of that thick, sweet, neutral beverage want people to stop drinking beer and whisky, so that they may drink more cocoa.

I would consider myself a servant of humanity if I could trace (and prove) so simple a connection in America. Perhaps the makers of soft drinks, sodas, pops, ginger ales, ice creams, orange and pineapple drinks did contribute to the cause of Prohibition; but no evidence of a dark conspiracy exists. The notorious $25,000 check made out by the non-existent John T. King to the order of the crusading (and eventually imprisoned) Superintendent Anderson came from the Candler Building in New York and Candler is the name of the original manufacturer of Coca-Cola — but this hardly

constitutes evidence of a plot. Looking back into the movement which culminated in the Amendment, I find no single villain of the play. Prohibition, historically considered, has its elements of melodrama, farce, spectacle, and even a sort of thin nobility; but it does not fall into tidy categories. Especially it lacks great leaders and great leaders are lacking on the side of the wets, as well.

oooo

At one point only the history of Prohibition has specific relation to the future of drinking. It is, naturally, the turning point, the moment, lasting over a period of years, when the enemies of drink abandoned their love for the drunkard and took on their abiding, passionate hatred of the saloon. If a date is wanted, Christmas Week

of 1873 will serve; it provided the dramatic high light.[1]

Until that time the crusade against liquor was part of the great crusade against sin which ran through the United States for a century. Temperance meetings were precise parallels to revivals, with hymn tunes, exhortations, "testimony" from converts and the like. For thirty years at the beginning of the nineteenth century the country was hysterically concerned with salvation and, as drink stood in the way of sanctity, drink was an enemy. For as long and longer, the country was enthusiastic about progress and believed that ultimate perfection

[1] This chapter is all right if you care for "the background." If you do not, you can skip directly to The Romance of the Speakeasy, which follows, without any great loss.

was probably around the corner; whether you thought perfection meant primitive Christianity, communism, free love, vegetarianism, or merely the elimination of a few defects from the structure of the United States of America, it left no place for the drunkard.

The climax of this religious enthusiasm came in the 1840's when the Six Reformed Drunkards of Baltimore went like evangelists through the country and John Bartholomew Gough recited the description of his *delirium tremens* which afterward became a set piece of grammar-school oratory. In the next decade Neal Dow "put over" a real prohibitory statute in Maine, but it remained the solitary example of its kind, the rest of the Union being torn between local option, no license, and the free sale of liquor.

And then in 1873 Diocletian Lewis, inventor of the wooden dumb-bell and the bean bag, writer on diet and enemy of the corset, defender of night air and creator of the slogan "a clean tooth never decays", author of "Chastity, or Our Secret Sins", — "the beautiful brain-eating Dio" as he was called, delivered a lecture at Hillsboro, Ohio, and the mischief began. Lewis was "a Temperance man", but he advised the women of Hillsboro to go and pray in the saloons; he pointed out the enemy to women who in their innocence had believed that "those second-rate looking places were barber-shops." So the women took their knitting and zephyr work and embroidery and went to the saloons. "There are photographs extant representing the stirring scenes when, amid the ringing of church bells, the contents of every barrel, cask

and bottle in a saloon were sent gurgling into the gutter, the owner insisting that women's hands alone should do this work, perhaps with some dim thought in his muddled mind of the poetic justice due to the Nemesis he thus invoked." (The style betrays Miss Frances Willard.)

The significance lies not in the success of the Women's Crusade, which was fleeting, but in the adoption of the new enemy by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which was just then becoming effective and to which Frances Willard turned. In the next twenty years — that is until the Anti-Saloon League was founded in 1895 — the dominant influence of Frances Willard turned the attack on drinking away from the individual, made it a social and political question. The W.C.T.U. still sought

converts, rejoiced in the reformed drunkards, pinned white ribbons, sent petitions and testimonials; but deep underground Miss Willard was at work, compelling the Union to accept women's suffrage and, what was even harder, forcing them to abandon their allegiance to the Republican Party, "the Party of moral ideas" which had saved the Union, given America its martyr President, abolished slavery, and restored sound money — but which was, regrettably, "under the thumb of the brewers." With much searching of her heart, Miss Willard gave up the Republicans — and turned to the outcast Prohibitionists, and thus helped elect the first Democratic President after the Civil War, and thus brought religious fervor and a subtle political instinct to the Prohibitionists and ultimately to the Anti-Saloon League.

Not without tears. The strange simple Americans of that time believed that the liquor problem ought to be kept out of politics and churches sometimes refused to let Miss Willard and the W.C.T.U. meet within their doors unless they promised to give up their political affiliations. Miss Willard rejected the compromise and the churches submitted — shall we say? — to the indignity of being associated with a political lobby.

The enemies of Prohibition often emphasize the fact that it is "organized" — as a contrast with the "personal liberty" of its enemies. The fact is that the whole movement against liquor only followed the American plan of business and politics in the 1870's and '80's. It was the gilded age, the boom period of bigness and organization and money power; minorities were

ruthlessly trodden under foot, and if the foes of liquor meant to survive, they had to adapt themselves to the contemporary system of life. They did this, and made the system more powerful and more rigid by their adherence.

I suspect that no image has hampered the enemies of Prohibition so much as that of the sour-faced, black-gloved gaunt busybody which is identified as the Puritan and the Dry. It would take too long to explain why the name of Puritan is misapplied; the inappropriateness of the symbol is clear from the single circumstance that so long as the Prohibitionist remained a religious fanatic he was comparatively harmless; when he deserted the pulpit and went into a business office, he became effective. Prohibition became a business, found

allies in Big Business, and destroyed the business of the distillers and the brewers.

I hardly assert that the figure which Rollin Kirby, for example, so brilliantly executes, is altogether wrong; there is a suggestion of the snooper, of the mean virtue which rises from impotence to enjoy vice, of the cruel pleasure in inflicting pain, all of which, the wet is sure, are natural to the officious dry. The image is right enough if one wants to stir up hatred or keep prejudice alive; but it suggests the wrong kind of attack on the enemy of drinking, for the attack has to be at least as intelligent and as well-organized as the defence.

Very few leaders of the wets allow their followers to see that the drys are animated by anything more than religious conviction, furious prejudice against drinking, and an intense

WHEN THE PROHIBITIONIST WENT INTO
THE BUSINESS OFFICE HE BECAME
A SUCCESS

desire to interfere with and annoy other people. Actually the drys have a moral system and a political philosophy and this system and this philosophy are, quite apart from Prohibition, dominant in America to-day. Prohibition attached itself to the stronger side and won out.

The moral system is not Puritanism, but the wreckage of Calvinism as reconstructed by the Methodists, with infiltrations of the liberal morality of uplift. From Calvinism comes the acute sense of sin; from Methodism the glorification of God measured by the number of converts, the publicity of moral failure and regeneration, the whole machinery by which people are compelled to regulate their private lives in accordance with public command; and from the religion of uplift comes the moral obligation not only to do good and be good, but to

make others good lest evil emanations rise from evil thoughts and deeds; lest the syllogism, "God is Good and God is All" be broken down unless "All is Good" be added. It is true that the reformer of fifty years ago wanted to let the individual alone, but he, too, went into the business of reform, and there is a definite — although hidden — connection between the uplifter who fought for clean cities and the reformer who conducts raids on saloons. Their idea of what constitutes goodness may change; but all of them believe that goodness can be imposed from the outside and made compulsory by law. That remains the dominant American system of morality.

Parallel to it runs the dominant American political system in the breakdown of Jeffersonian democracy and the erection of the Hamil-

tonian centralized government. It is quite useless to belittle Alexander Hamilton merely because his plan of government happened to suit the country a hundred years after his death. The transcontinental railways, the telegraph, the Bessemer process, and every mechanical change which brought the frontiers of America into communication with each other and made America an industrial community are much more to blame than Hamilton, who was merely an aristocrat with a genius for government. The country was big, business was big; every one worshipped bigness and the government grew big. The drys saw this and like intelligent people used the government; while the wets chattered on about personal liberty as if the government weren't necessarily infringing on personal liberty in a hundred other ways

every day of their lives. Their duty — to themselves — was plain. They should have organized a vast propaganda for an amendment reading, "Congress shall make no law abridging the right of the people to drink intoxicating liquors." They would have done even better to take the offensive and to offer the business of making and selling liquor to the National Government. Socialistic, the proposal might have appeared in the 1880's, but a drinker would rather have his drink under Socialism than do without under a social system which is supposed to protect the rights of the individual. The Nation, or the State, as dispenser of liquor, would at least have been big and organized and businesslike, as everything else in America was becoming. It would have offended the moral but not the economic habits of the people. The

propaganda of the brewers and distillers offended both. In an era of centralization it begged humbly for separatism, for the privilege of the single individual.[1]

It is idle to scan the past without some thought of the future. The past indicates simply that the drys were "in tune with the Infinite", or at least with that important part of the infinite which constituted the American habit of

[1] I am aware of the apparent discrepancy between this statement and the previous assertion that the American people were not so standardized and "consolidated" as the Prohibitionists assumed. Thinking about the future of drinking does not make for logic, anyhow. But at least this can be said: the general tendency, with which the drys associated themselves, was for conformity and the big-scale operation imposed from above; the wets were on the losing side. Only the general tendency had not, and has not, gone far enough to make the winning side safe.

mind, the tendency of American life. Working with the existing machinery, they created "what is screamingly called Prohibition,"[1] while the wets, working against it, failed. The moral of that is clear. If the wets want to break down the dry régime, if they really aren't having a better time now at their drinking than they ever had before, they need only convert the whole of America, or fifty-one per cent. of the voting population in each State, to extreme individualism. Or they might try philosophical Anarchism — they will have as easy a time with one as with the other. It is a simple matter to undermine the philosophy of a nation, to turn back the hands of the clock, to decentralize industry, to take away from the Federal Government most of its functions — and then to

[1] Mr. Lardner

repeal the Amendment. Almost as simple as it is to enforce the Amendment itself.

The wets, at the present time, are trying to change the Amendment and its enforcing acts without changing the people. They think that their only enemies are the drys. The truth is that the history of America is against them.

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANCE OF THE SPEAKEASY

On the other hand — the history of America is not yet ended.

Looking down on Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street, observing traffic stop at the mere change of a light, the eminent folk-psychologist Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, is said to have cast into the air the terse, but priceless, comment, "A docile people!"

Less noble observers, speeding through the Alleghenies in Pullman sleepers, or spending six weeks disguised as unskilled mechanics, or noting the ghastly suburban developments outside

New York, or, by exception, living long in America and thinking deeply about Americans, have varied the theme. From them we learn that the Americans are a mechanized people, a materialist people (and, of course, also an idealistic people with false ideals, fanatically held), a people devoted to "*le make-money*" (in the phrase of the French engineer, Chevalier, who in the 1830's also remarked that the Americans are always in a hurry), a people hostile to the individual, the eccentric, the unconventional; that the Mississippi valley will be the last stronghold of middle-class morals — the catalogue is long and dreary. The Americans are a docile people!

Yet our Bar Associations and our President assert that we are the most lawless people in the world and our experience of Prohibition indi-

cates that we are among the most romantic. One begins to suspect that broad general statements about national character mean either the opposite of what they say, or nothing at all.

There is, of course, the psychological explanation that we are, in essence, a nation of law-breakers and that we deliberately pass more laws than any other nation in the world, so that we may have the pleasure of breaking them. Or that we are really law-abiding, and break the laws we venerate in order to undergo the exquisite torture of remorse.[1]

[1] These theories are what Joe Frisco calls "damn silly, but awfully clever." I have heard worse. Add to them the established principle of "ambivalence" as handed down by the analysts of Vienna — the identity of love and hate, the parallelism of attraction and repulsion, — and you can work up quite a profound explanation of nearly everything. We have been told often enough that

However these things may be, a hundred thousand speakeasies flourish in America.

The usual assumption is that the speakeasies flourish to satisfy the national taste for liquor.

I submit that they satisfy our pride and a childish illusion of wickedness, a tawdry romanticism. It is perhaps the hardest thing to say of Americans that when they wanted to escape from the dullness of their mechanized lives, from the grind and the routine, they were willing to escape to the average urban speakeasy, the average suburban roadhouse.

But with the craving for liquor the speak-

the reformers are bitter against liquor because secretly they envy the drinkers. In all fairness we should assume that the drunkard takes his drink because he hates it and secretly aspires to the teetotalism of — shall we say a Dry Senator?

easy has little to do. Perhaps, in the first year of Prohibition, before the bootlegging industry was fully organized, the speakeasy served its traditional purpose. Even now it helps those shiftless and wandering people who have failed to make permanent arrangements with our better bootleggers, especially if they insist upon having bacardi, cognac, or (to their own lasting disgrace) sweet liqueurs. Otherwise, gin and Scotch are procurable in every grade at one tenth the speakeasy price; the vermouth, waters, and juices for making them palatable are easily obtained, the business of preparing drinks is a pleasant one. And in most American homes, the air is a little more invigorating than it is in most American speakeasies.

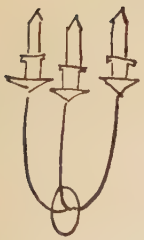
The speakeasy allays the great American

fear of going home, of which we shall inevitably hear more a bit farther on. I suggest to aspirants for the fame of Darwin, Westermarck, Freud, and Einstein, a study of the Home, especially the Anglo-Saxon Home in its relation to private morals, group psychology, and drinking, among other things. I would like to know how the idea that the Lares and Penates were sacred changed into the idea that a given set of walls was sacred. I would like to know whether the hard-drinking squires of the eighteenth century thought as sentimentally of the home as the tippling Victorians. For I suspect that the crimes of liquor (and the crimes against liquor) began when drinking was edged out of the home, when it became immoral to have nightcaps and (monstrosity[1] of

[1] This is, of course, sheer prejudice.

the worst order) it also became proper to give a man food without giving him drink.

The destruction of the American home (urbanization, the two-family house in the suburbs, the forty-family apartment in the city, the lack of fixed family habitations, the great shiftings of tin-can tourists to Florida a few years ago, the Iowa, Arkansas, and New Hampshire clubs of middle-aged men and women in Los Angeles, the complete absence of the castle sense, the necessity of moving every year or two in the city, every five years in the country — the complete breakdown of any feeling of sacredness about the idea of Home) was paralleled by the growth of the idea of the sacredness of the saloon. The saloon was the stopping place on the way home — postponing the inevitable hour; it was the place of escape when



THE WOMAN DRINKER HAS ALWAYS BEEN
A THORN IN THE FLESH OF THE MAN
SHE IS DRINKING WITH

home became intolerable. It was with her customary insight that Frances Willard clung to the name of "Home Protection Party" and thus provided Carry A. Nation with her variation, "Your Loyal Home Defender." The home which drove out liquor collapsed before the attractions of the saloon. The great opportunity now exists for the restoration of the salon, if not the saloon, in America. Civilization is, so to speak, a race between the speakeasy and the private apartment.

I am considering now the cocktail-speakeasy, not the beer garden and the restaurant which serves liquor, and am thinking of the speakeasy in large cities. The back room of the sheriff's home in a country village may have its points; my only acquaintance with it is from the outside, waiting for the sheriff to

bring forth, from his stock in the garage, the bottle or two which my friends were buying. In the city speakeasy of the low (which is the dominant) type, the consumer of gin cocktails or of whisky and soda is a fool. He is paying outrageously for protection which he doesn't require; he is drinking, in tawdry surroundings, liquor of questionable purity; and he is succumbing to the pressure-to-drink which is one of the most ruthless and powerful engines created in America by Prohibition.[1]

I have, it would appear, little respect for the ordinary speakeasy. I am sure that the bartenders are rare and romantic characters and that the company is of the best. But I and every one else can get better liquor in better

[1] See Chapter V.

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surroundings. The thrill of carrying ten or fifteen cards with the names of The Sixteen Club, Antoine et Fernand, 22 East Mulligan Street, all O.K.'d by the headwaiter, has become stale. At reputable speakeasies I have had gin fizzes with less than a thimbleful of gin — and very second-rate whiskies and hovering waiters. By this time I take no pleasure — none — in breaking the law. And the single raid I experienced was a little less exciting than a game of double solitaire.

A nation which did not allow itself to drink decently in the home now forces itself to be happy in the speakeasy. It is a just retribution!

Oddly enough, the speakeasy gives the lie to the mild-mannered "Of course we don't want the saloon back."

Until we learn how to drink at home with considerable more technical skill and social grace than we now possess, we will need the saloon as much as ever.

The speakeasy serving second-rate liquor has learned, however, to serve first-rate food. Perhaps because the Latin temperament refuses to take Puritanism about food and drink seriously, and could hardly believe that the formidable Anglo-Saxons really meant what they said about Prohibition, the business of providing exceptionally good food, with liquor above the average in quality and in price, has fallen into the hands of Italians and Frenchmen, who, in our large cities, are doing it very well indeed. It appears that they are not as skillful about police protection as their more

native brothers, but they retain some sense of the quality of liquor, and I have seen a "corked" bottle of Burgundy withdrawn from the table with all the alacrity of a generous spirit. In these, the highest class of speakeasy, French wines are procurable and even whiskies and gins arrive at some degree of purity. These restaurants where the food is so good that they could survive without selling liquor are social centers of a high type, and it is in them that the new status of the woman drinker becomes a refinement of civilization.

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But it is not at all sure that Prohibition created the woman drinker. Prohibition came in with the end of the war and the beginning of the disasters of the "peace." It arrived officially as an amendment immediately preceding the

triumph of Woman Suffrage, and the fact that women had taken to drinking, with their characteristic thoroughness, just when Prohibition became legal, may be merely a coincidence. Enthusiasm over their presence at our better bars has been expressed by Mr. Heywood Broun and other believers in the Victorian virtue by which woman refines our vices and redoubles our joy. It is not, however, an unmixed benefit. For the woman drinker has always been a thorn in the flesh of the man she is drinking with, and — to anticipate the conclusion — it is very likely that the future of drinking lies in the hands of women.

Romance in the speakeasy came largely from association with the new and nobler criminals. It was pleasant to feel that with every

four or five Martinis one was not only drowning out the miseries of post-war disillusion, but shaking hands with a bold spirit who ran rum and shot down hijackers and otherwise defied the government. For the government, of course, was one of those large and degenerate institutions which had made the war and had not been able to make peace, and had profited by both. The queer thing was that the new criminals were not as intellectual as their patrons. They were criminals, first, because they violated the Amendment, and in the eyes of good Prohibitionists this was a more serious crime than the accidents of theft and murder to which it lead. What the sceptical patron of the speakeasy found it very easy to understand was that the bootlegger was constantly committing a crime against drink, by adultera-

tion, and that he was opposed with violence to any attempt to repeal the Amendment. Perhaps the most moving moment in "The Old Soak", Don Marquis' hymn to drinking, was when the genial drinker became suddenly aware of the fact that the bootlegger was trafficking in liquor, not because of friendliness to drink, but for money.

The new criminals are daring and exciting, but they are hardly the Robin Hoods of a mechanical era. Their great interest to the speculative mind is that they violate the Amendment and are also opposed to its repeal; that the "drys" are their enemies and they are the friends of the "drys." I like to look forward to the time when, by some miracle, the people of the United States shall have a chance to vote down the Eighteenth Amendment, and

ROMANCE IN THE SPEAKEASY CAME LARGELY FROM ASSOCIATION WITH THE NEW AND NOBLER CRIMINALS

the bootleggers and the gangsters of the entire country will mount machine guns at the polls, to mow down the "wets" while the "drys", protected, yet averting their faces from these fanatical supporters, go in to vote for Prohibition.

Nevertheless, the rackets have added color and excitement to life in America. As they have little to do with the future of drinking, I refer the reader to Mr. Edward D. Sullivan's "Rattling The Cup", and if the reader is sceptical and wants a sample, I offer him the following from that most entertaining book:

"Among the obituary cases already mentioned in this book was Samoots Amatuna, who was a member of the Genna gang until blown

out of it for all eternity. Samoots was a particularly snappy dresser, even when it made him uncomfortable. He wore a spring coat with fur on it, and in the colder months was one of the bulkiest packages of silks and furs that ever thronged a giant limousine. He had more than two hundred silk shirts at one time, and his fears for their welfare when at the laundry, and his frequent visits and advice on the subject led to his being known with amusement throughout the laundry industry in Chicago.

"One day a package of his shirts was delivered and the imprint of an iron showed clearly on the pink bosom of the top shirt. It was slightly burned. Samoots, who was in the habit of waking every morning in a rage anyway, ran yowling down the stairs, placed his gun

against the delivery man's heart and, after calling every curse in his language down upon the head of the driver and all laundrymen, he ran to the horse's head and shot it dead."

CHAPTER IV

THE ART OF DRINKING

On the other hand, it is no use pretending that the art of drinking was ever skillfully practised in America. Not even in the Gilded Age, when Ward McAllister spoke of putting ice into (not even around) white wines and specifically champagne; not perhaps under the social guidance of Harry Lehr, who had, perhaps, a personal interest in the amount of Moet et Chandon consumed.

None of the arts of living is well practised against a powerfully organized morality, and none of the vices. The dim dreariness of the scandals of Washington, the vague imputations

of dull mistresses of second-rate political jobbers which came out during the exposure of the Ohio gang contrast with the silks and repartee and luxuriousness of the Steinheil case in France, where habit has given corruption a framework within which it lives an almost decent life. The great American courtesans have learned and lived abroad.

In the letters of Mrs. Wharton and Henry James, these two observers (and admirers) of the European scene comment on the love affair of George Sand and Alfred de Musset, exposing with their customary precision and delicacy the difference between such an affair and a comparable event in America. "They pigged it" is an expression used by James, alluding to the mean dwelling, the lack of comfort, the general air of dreariness in which part of the

romance was played. And he recognizes the circumstance that the lovers rose above the piggishness because society had created a series of conventions and, equally important, a group of words on which the liaison could thrive. With available names for difficult subjects, the subjects can not only be talked about, but brought into action.[1]

Drinking has always been under the religious ban in America and from pre-Revolution-

[1] The observer of society in America may compare the changes in habits brought about by the gradual change in the meaning of the words "making love" from the original sense of flirtation to the point where it coincides with the French "*faire l'amour*", and even more startling, the social and moral changes following on the exploitation of the word "it", so neutral in associations, for the franker "sex appeal" and the more obscure and less printable terms they displaced.

ary times was denounced on moral and social grounds. It could not, therefore, thrive as a free art, and the natural consequence was that wine, the noblest of all drinks, the foundation of all good drinking, had to yield place to rum, whisky, gins, and mixed drinks. Our heritage from Britain helped in this unfortunate displacement, for Britons, who never will be slaves to habit, changed their drinks in accordance with naval policy and if their alliance was with Portugal (the oldest and the dimmest of their allies) and Spain, they were willing to drink the products of these countries and their colonies; and were willing to go to war with France and give up their claret (which to this day, with atavistic fear of Napoleon, they refuse to call Bordeaux) while they took to Dutch gin. The great age of English literature *and* urbanity

came, naturally, during a period of peace with France when gentleman drank French wines and it was the mark of a gentleman to drink a good deal of them.

But long drinking implies social approval, which America always refused its drinkers, and it implies leisure which the ardent pioneer never had. The Americans (always in a hurry) took to hurried drinks and the westering woodsman carried with him his sovereign specifics against malaria — strong and concentrated liquor, taking up little space in the covered wagon, acting rapidly against the disease and against the uneasiness of lonely days in the clearing and by the edge of the swamp.

Liquor, then, was used for its effect (reduced in the end to pure kick) and was not so much drunk as swallowed. Taste disappeared

and from that moment it became a matter of indifference to the gods whether Americans were permitted to drink freely or not.

There is much to be said in favor of drunkenness — most of it as an elaboration in psychoanalytic terms of Rabelais' "*de vin divin on devient*", but there are ways and ways of approaching divinity and there is a special circle in hell for those who, knowing the better way, choose the worse. A difference exists, too, in the quality of being drunk, which rises from the quality of the chosen drink. Rabelais said nothing of becoming divine on twenty cocktails made of synthetic gin and bottled orange juice.

Doctor Johnson, on the other hand, said that people who lack taste in food and drink are likely to lack taste in all other things. The

American drinker not only let his natural taste atrophy, he positively corrupted it, in the twenty years preceding Prohibition, by drinking some of the foulest mixtures known to man, in which he debased pure liquors, imported nauseous flavorings, and defied the laws of harmony and decorum. Of that period Mr. George Jean Nathan has written:

"The popularity of the cocktail marked another debasing of the alcoholic art. Following the Martini, Manhattan and Old-Fashioned Whiskey cocktails — the inaugural cocktail trinity — there descended upon the American scene a hundred and one ridiculous mixtures, without rhyme or reason, that made sorry mock of respectable and intelligent drinking. The Bronx cocktail brought orange juice mixed with its gin, a combination akin to mixing

prune juice with Pilsner. The Clover Club idiotically took gin and shook it up with, among other things, the white of an egg and raspberry syrup. The Colonial performed the atrocity of defiling its gin with grape-fruit juice and maraschino. The Cream Fizz went in, clownlike, for gin and sweet cream. . . .

"Other masterpieces of the prevalent alcoholic blasphemy were the Chocolate cocktail that churned an egg, bitters, port wine and sugar; the Cider cocktail that juggled gin, cider, lemon peel and bitters; the Duplex that took in a liberal dash of Horsford's acid phosphate; the Coffee that added Mocha and Java to brandy and port; and the Metropole that performed with gum syrup, Peyschaud bitters, orange bitters, brandy and French vermouth — not forgetting the Narragansett that

mixed whiskey, absinthe and Italian vermouth. There were also the so-called Puritan, made up of yellow chartreuse, gin, French vermouth and orange bitters; the Rob Roy, with its Scotch whiskey, Italian vermouth and bitters embellished with an olive; the Trilby, with its acid phosphate, rye whiskey and Calisaya; and the Tuxedo, with its unbelievable amalgam of gin, sherry and Italian vermouth.

"In the way of miscellaneous mixed drinks, there were the Champagne Cup, that heathenish hodge-podge of champagne, sugar, lemon, orange, berries, cucumber, brandy, maraschino, white Curaçao, sherry and mint; the Golden Fizz, with its lemon juice, sugar and yolk of an egg added to the gin; Plush, with its ungodly alliance of champagne and claret; Velvet, that combined champagne and stout; and the well-

known Port and Starboard, composed of one-half orange Curaçao and one-half crême de menthe. The Pousse Café sought to gain an audience for itself by grading raspberry syrup, maraschino, orange Curaçao, yellow chartreuse, green chartreuse and brandy; the Royal Plush by stirring up champagne and Burgundy in equal parts; Shandy Gaff by combining beer or ale with ginger ale; the Silver Fizz by merging the white of an egg, lemon juice and powdered sugar with gin; and the Syracuse Cobbler by taking proud Medford rum and fusing it with ginger ale and lemon rind.

"As if all this was not enough, the alcoholic morons of the land proceeded then to a further corruption of their Heaven-sent nectars by using ice in places where ice was as completely ruinous as it would be to a Welsh rarebit. Ice in

claret became so general a thing that everyone still remembers it. Tom and Jerry, prepared hours before it was due to delight the tonsils, was preserved by putting it temporarily in the refrigerator, where it promptly lost what could never be recaptured by subsequent heating. White wines were chilled out of their quality, and even the lowly Chiantis were robbed of what bouquet they may have had by putting cracked ice into the glasses. I have drunk Moselle in those days that was made indistinguishable from colored ice-water, and Burgundy that was so cold I couldn't make out its flavor. Even beer, save in the emporia presided over by Bavarians and Bohemians, was often iced to the point where its foam took on the appearance of dry shaving lather.

"Champagne was kept lying flat on its side

by ninety-nine Americans out of every hundred who drank it, instead of being faintly tilted toward the cork, and so was gradually impaired beyond recall. Beer, in most American homes, was served in thin glasses that effeminized it. Port was guzzled at the height of Summer, and sparkling Saumurs were often poured into cut-glass pitchers and allowed to stand around on tables awaiting the moment of their service. Heavy wines, such as Chambertin, Pommard, etc., were abruptly decanted, their temperature lowered instead of slightly raised, and so made mock of. Stout was treated as if it were beer. The finer Bordeaux were assaulted before their eighth birthday. The sweet Dordogne wines were served with meat and fowl, and Chablis Moutonne, 1904, the princess of its breed, was served after the soup. Precious

Bourbon was contaminated with ginger ale; brandy was ignited to amuse the children; Tokay was served in sizeable water tumblers; and the divine blood of the Gironde country was often actually sucked up through a straw.

"That such a people and such a nation do not richly deserve the visitation upon them of the Eighteenth Amendment to their Constitution, I have considerable trouble in believing." [1]

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If this revolting catalogue is correctly dated — that is, if all the drinks listed were prepared and drunk before Prohibition, the bill of complaint against the woman drinker is perceptibly diminished. The woman drinker is far more

[1] And at that I have quoted, from the *American Mercury*, only half of Mr. Nathan's magnificent tirade.

tolerant than the male of sweet liqueurs and does not know that only a handful of drinks are appropriate after a meal: brandy, armagnac (which is a brandy), marc (preferably a *bon vieux marc de bourgogne*), calvados, and as a last concession to a taste just barely rescuable from perdition, kümmel. The woman drinker's effect on the taste of drinks is due partly to her lack of experience, to the fact that she began drinking in a country already low in taste and when liquor was beginning to go bad; but another item is the superstition among men that her ideal drink approached as closely as possible the ice-cream soda and the banana split. The men, in self-protection, wanted her to drink mild drinks and thought the way to gain their end, not too flagrantly, was to give

her drinks slightly sickening in flavor (on the supposition that a suffering woman is preferable to a drinking or drunken one) and viscous with whipped cream.

Perhaps, then, the only novelty introduced to make drinking pleasant for women was the new nomenclature of drinks. If the Alexander was a popular drink with men before prohibition and was not their concession to the few women drinkers of their acquaintance, the leering and suggestive names of drinks were certainly invented, by men, to add piquancy to the nauseating mixtures they offered. They called them Between the Sheets and searched the catalogue of penny candies and French perfumes for Love Nest and Kiss Me Quick; they tried so hard to suggest that drinking was aphrodisiac and so hard to forget that drinking,

THE MEN, IN SELF-PROTECTION, WANTED HER TO DRINK MILD DRINKS AND THOUGHT THE WAY TO GAIN THEIR END WAS TO GIVE HER DRINKS SLIGHTLY SICKENING IN FLAVOR

in any decent civilization, is an end in itself. Even if it be a bad end.

The actual taste of Scotch and gin began to vanish and the gin and gingerale combination assumed its dominant position. Easy to prepare, not actually rasping in the throat, and miraculous in its power to drown out the pungency of evil materials, it is the typical Prohibition drink. One would say that nothing more need be known of Prohibition, but there is always abyss beneath abyss.

For evil communications corrupt manners and the American drinker has become so accustomed to the taste of ginger ale that he pours it not only into gin, but into whisky, good whisky and bad alike.

So far as the records go, no lover of drinking has yet gone out into the night and shot himself as a gesture of protest.

Prohibition has created a nation of men and women who do not know what to do with the liquor they so hardly come by.

I have seen a head waiter plunge a bottle of Chambertin into a bucket of ice at one of the most expensive speakeasy restaurants in New York and almost any waiter will offer to put ice *into* your glass if you demand that your Sauterne be chilled. Because champagne is the most expensive of imported wines, people drink it with fish and roasts and go in for Benedictine or brandy with their dessert. The catalogue is painful.

I have said that you can drink better liquor

IF HE IS TEARFUL, SYMPATHY IS INDICATED

in more agreeable surroundings at home. And although I insist that this is possible, I do not assert that it is likely. For the serving of drinks in the home has also developed in accordance with the standards of Prohibition.

One of the most inveterate and popular of party givers in New York has for five years served nothing but warm gin-and-fruit-juice cocktails. Like most other drinkers, he has served and drunk them before, during, and after dinner. Perhaps he is to be forgiven because he is a writer.

The homes of the wealthy are also the homes of this solecism. It is not unusual to offer cocktails to guests who drop in for coffee after dinner — not very good cocktails, of course, but still cocktails — gin and fruit juice.

Even the delicate little attention of straining

out the pulp of orange and lemon and grapefruit is more notable in the breach than the observance. And although we live in the country which a hundred years ago began to ship ice to the nabobs of John Company in India, it is almost impossible to get a cocktail correctly iced.[1]

The final item is warm sweet champagne. This is the social triumph of the extremely rich and in my experience they make the most of

[1] The gas and electric refrigerators are partly to blame. They provide a fixed and totally insufficient number of cubes of ice and the doltishness of their owners prevents them from confessing the inadequacy of the machine. Sixty cubes of ice, which is high capacity for the average home refrigerator, serves for fifteen drinks — the first fifteen, if none has been used for ice water or coffee before the drinking begins. After that, the hapless drinkers stand around waiting for hell to freeze over and finally

it. I have, in passing an open door, seen champagne standing unprotected on the serving table or sideboard half an hour before dinner is announced; I have seen it at large and important gatherings brought up in its original straw and instantly served; and I have seen it served in glasses containing shaved ice. The agony has been perceptibly diminished by the discovery that most of it was sweet white wine and a charge of some chemical, rumored to be bicarbonate of soda.

The ingenuity of Americans, however, is equal to any task. They have invented or im-

skim the top layer of ice, toss it into the warm drink, and depart muttering. For the benefit of those interested in avoiding this situation, I note that the iceman of an elder and better day is still willing to oblige and that fifty pounds of ice, even if exposed to the elements in the sink, will last a long time.

ported the frozen silver ball to take the place of ice. Its supreme merit is that even as it cools the liquid in which it is immersed, it does not dissolve and weaken the drink. If the average maker of cocktails cannot afford the silver ball, he can learn from it. In making a good cocktail, where the proportions are fixed, shaved and small pieces of ice are a mistake, since the melting which goes on while the cocktail is being shaken, dilutes the cocktail and spoils the harmony of the drink. The largest possible piece, shaken the shortest possible time to insure the right degree of cold, should be used.

Or should not, if you do not believe in drinking.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGION OF DRINKING

FAILING to become an art, drinking in America has become a religion.

It would give my argument a certain solidity if I could prove that the same process has occurred in other fields, and it is quite possible that the religion of cleanliness and the religion of health and of sport have developed in America, because they have failed to become minor arts in the great art of having what Patrick Geddes calls "good days." But I fear that in general what does not manage to become an art in America becomes a business. In the end, of

course, it works for the best, as business becomes a religion.

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The religion of drinking is tyrannical, evangelist, and intolerant. It demands of its votary that he shall have no other god but liquor, and no other ritual but the ritual of the cocktail and the long drink. As other cults have declared that man is a sinful animal or a saved animal, the new religion declares that he is a drinking animal — and nothing else.

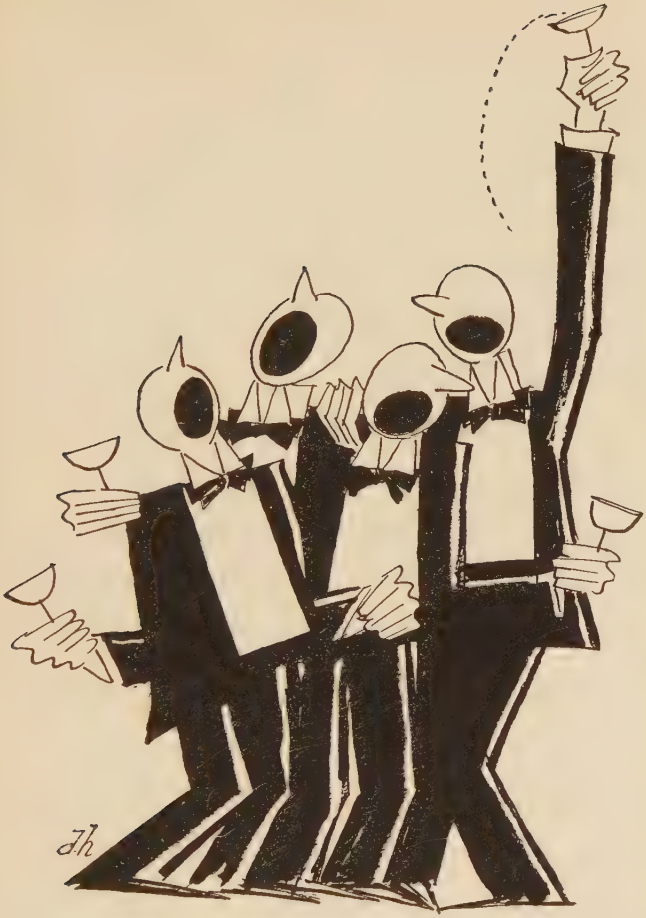
It bears down on the drinker with an unremitting pressure, calling him from all other activities and promising him the Kingdom of Heaven. In this kingdom it has erected the sovereign principle of the sacredness of the drunkard. There at least it touches upon the paganism it so often invokes and although the

collegiate drinker (in the fortieth year of his age) stumbling out of a dark speakeasy in the hope of getting home before he gets sick, is a poor representative of Bacchus, Dionysus, and the Great God Pan — he is all we have to cherish and protect.

The drunkard can do no wrong: on that principle the religion of drinking rests and it is one to which all drinkers must subscribe. It puts a premium on speed in getting drunk, for the first man drunk sets the pace for all the others and their desires must be accommodated to his requirements. If he is bellicose, their ideals of a charming society must be sacrificed, for what does a beaten-up waiter or comparatively sober acquaintance matter in comparison with the ecstasy of the drunkard? If he is tearful — if she is tearful — sympathy is indi-

cated; and if he or she becomes confidential and will tell those things which one would rather not hear, these things must be not only listened to, but forgotten. The drunkard has the right to be indiscriminately amorous, destructive of property, insulting, and loud; he has the privilege of making it impossible for any one else to listen to the night-club comedian; and he has the supreme right of dictating where the party shall go and how long it shall continue. Because he is drunker than any one else, because he has seen the god of the new religion.

Behind this feeling of the sacredness of the drunkard lies hidden a singular notion; that the drunkard is not himself. Since he is not himself, he can do no wrong. The fallacy is to be found in the first assumption.



THE DRUNKARD HAS THE RIGHT TO BE INDISCRIMINATELY LOUD

For the drunkard, far from being not himself, is almost always much more himself in liquor than in sobriety. It is the experience of those who know the victims of psychoanalysis that they return from their courses cured, possibly, but ever so much more what they were before. The idea that a courteous man who becomes rude under liquor is not himself was invented by those who could not discern the rudeness under the courtesy. An habitual observer of men and women learns nothing new from their conduct when they are drunk. That a timid man may become arrogant is not a revelation to those who have deeply felt his timidity; and in my own experience I have never known a fundamentally agreeable and decent person to be anything else when drink had taken him.

It is extraordinary, isn't it, that the apolo-

gists for the drunken can point to no instances in which the normal brutal and discourteous and disagreeable man becomes charming when drunk? For surely, if drink brings out latent capacities, the hard-boiled should turn attractive. Actually, they may become sentimental — but that is part of their being hard.

Once you establish the supremacy of the earliest drunkard, you call up the strange figure of the man of one drink.

He is the happy warrior of drunkenness. At one moment he is with you, his faculties matching yours, in the early stages of taking the first two or three drinks. And the next moment he is soaring magnificently, a roaring drunkard. You think, at first, that he has palmed drinks, swigged from the bottles; you refuse to tol-

erate the idea that he has simply gone drunk on one drink.

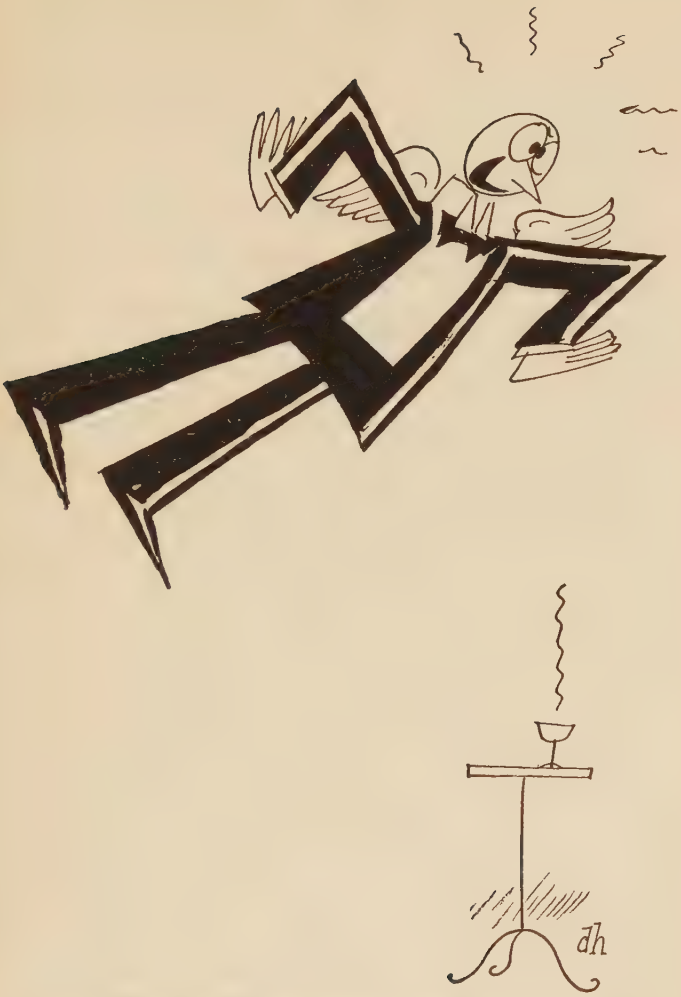
There is a drinker of talent, a fanatic in the religion, a man who sets out to get drunk and will argue fiercely that his nervous system demands it, who has become legendary because he has always half a dozen companions to relate his deeds. They are all drinking, yet they remember every word and every act of this leader. For years he has been the envy and despair of his friends because he hardly knows the meaning of a hang-over and is prepared to go on drinking for three or four or ten days at a time. His health is perfect, his eye clear.

He is one of the surprising people who get drunk without immersing themselves in alcohol and at the end of a night of intoxication he suffers from weariness because he has not slept,

but his system is untouched; he has sat for three or four hours hardly touching his glass, beautifully and contentedly drunk, and has taken in only a trace of bootleg poison. His friends assumed that he would crash in a year or two years or five; but they did not know that he was not drinking as they were, that a happy accident had made it possible for him to set his nervous system off with a single drink while they needed twenty.

To his condition, all drinkers aspire. The less gifted organically arrange to meet a drinking party at eleven and begin drinking at eight just to be in the spirit of the thing. They fortify themselves against the unhappy chance that some one else may arrive first at the dominant stage.

Having established their own inviolability,



AND THE NEXT MOMENT HE IS SOARING
MAGNIFICENTLY, A ROARING DRUNKARD

their tyrannical right, they can successfully impose upon others the obligation to drink. For the religion of drinking is a social religion and it asks only that every one present arrive as soon as possible at the level of drunkenness of the happiest member. Remembering George Meredith's sage remark that the spirit of comedy cannot exist in a social group in which disparate levels of intelligence are represented, with different ideals and manners, they want a blessed equality.

Yet here, also, they look in one direction. It is traditional to urge the slower drinker to greater endeavor and the man who wishes to savor each drink, to burn always with a slow ginlike flame, is abused and mocked for his sobriety. The command goes forth that he must drink up, in order to maintain the party spirit.

Even if there are ten who are slow and two or three who have already arrived, the command is the same.

It is not, however, ever permissible to suggest to the more rapid drinkers that they slow up for the same laudable end — to preserve a community of interest, a rough average of tightness. This would constitute blasphemy against the Dionysian ecstasy as it is now understood.

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The future of drinking as a pleasure, an interlude, a refinement of life, depends on the success of drinking as a religion. Hence an examination of motives is required.

The zealot of drinking — not the occasional drinker — is identified by his contempt for the non-drinker and by his insistence that he who

is not drinking with me is against me. Both emotions are the issue of fear.

The second one is the fear of loneliness. The religious drinker is a convert to a new religion and like the convert must have an audience. The supreme virtue of wine — that it frees and dilates the personality of the drinker — is turned into a vice when drinking is erected into a principle, and with the expansion of the soul comes the necessity to prove one's self, to impose the new soul upon others. This is a precise parallel to those testimonies of religious conversion given in public by which the regenerate attracted attention to themselves, solidified their position in society, and in a way gave hostages against the horrid possibility of backsliding. The process, of course, went on. After hundreds of others had become converted, after the nov-

elty of conversion had worn off and people became inattentive, the new soul promptly slid back into the pit. The movement downward was not only pleasant in itself, but it brought the now slipping gentleman twice under the focused rays of publicity: in the first days of his submission to the devil and at the next revival, when he again embraced Christ.

The new drunkard, the drunkard by conviction and not by taste, requires the same interest from the outside world. Of what use is that excitation of the nerves, that splendid emergence of all his latent powers, that sense of escaping from the world which badgers and beats him, if he cannot have the same world around him, to accept him at last at his own proper valuation? If his companions leave him even for a quarter hour, he is found slumped in a chair,

morose and hurt. The thought of their departure for good is more than he can bear. He must at any cost keep their company. So, in the moments between his bursts of imperious arrogance, he becomes beguilingly nice. At a pinch, if he retains any command of himself, he will even put away the superiority of his new condition and yield to others, for a little while, and go where they want to go, if only they will not leave him.

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The atavistic fear of being alone is the motive power of the prolonged party and the cult of the party is an element, subsidiary but significant, in the religion of drinking.

The ideal party begins with an attempt to make the home as like the roadhouse as possible. The roadhouse and its urban equivalent, the

speakeasy, are functionally places in which to get drunk, and the estate on Long Island, the Spanish villas of Palm Beach, the apartments of Chicago and New York, set out, in spite of their limitations, to rival the places arranged for drinking and drinking alone. The routine differs. In Westchester and on Long Island, along various lake shores and in all those communities to which the wealthy retreat from nearby cities, there is a choice between various formulas. They all begin with numerous cocktails before dinner — and dinner is scheduled late, as the theater is excluded from the forms of entertainment. (Quite properly, it appears, in view of what the theater offers.) The cocktail hour here is distinguished from most others because it rigorously rejects fruit juice: gin and vermouth are the prescribed elements and

the point of variation is in the proportions used.

The pre-war dryish cocktail was mixed two parts of gin to one of vermouth. Although the late Elbert Hubbard insisted that it tasted like kerosene, the average human palate still responds to this drink as agreeable in taste and proper in effect. That the whole of Europe is slowly deserting the simple vermouth aperitif and accepting the cocktail is not entirely a tribute to the imposing money power of America; it is an acknowledgment of our ingenuity and a reluctant admission that our taste is not altogether wanting. Or rather, *was* not wanting, for in Europe the gin and vermouth cocktail remains at the old level.

Why this proportion should have changed is a mystery, unless you assume that people no longer desired the cocktail for its taste and for

its brightening effect upon the appetite and began to use it for its kick. You are justified in the assumption. The ratio of gin went up — four to one, six to one, eight to one; and I have a record of the charming hostess who was asked how much vermouth she had allowed in an extremely successful cocktail and replied, "Oh, we just put in the gin and the ice and walk through the room with the vermouth bottle." The drink of Sairey Gamp (and of Mrs. Harris) is at last accepted by our *haute noblesse* — only Mrs. Gamp was a little more frank and took her gin warmish.

The number of these supercharged cocktails has also risen. No outside limit is set and the socially proper thing is to keep on serving cocktails indefinitely — that is, until something else can no longer be postponed — dinner, for in-

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stance. Expressed in terms of effect, one serves and drinks cocktails until one is pretty tight. Not incompetent, because more liquor is still to come; but well on the road.

Dinner, with wine, follows either at home or at the club. Thereafter a round of visits to others giving identical parties, hired entertainers, bridge, and the brilliant conversation on a wide range of topics which makes the aristocracy of America so famous throughout the world. The accompanying drinks are champagne and whiskey; beyond that point, insufficient experience makes it impossible for me to follow. The liquor is good.

The Palm Beach variant is appropriate to a nomadic people and Palm Beach has carried to perfection the ritual of the bar and the rail. Off the patio is the cozy room with a com-

fortable seat against the wall, the small and perfectly appointed bar, the stock of liquor brought over from Nassau. The traditional cocktail here is the bacardi (which is the single point at which the civilization of Palm Beach surpasses that of the North) and the traditional quantity is large. Palm Beach, however, is a mobile society; it lives largely in its motors, and a round of drinking implies visits to half a dozen bars as a minimum. Even a man with a bicycle could get in that many, and the habit of scooping up the host and carrying him on to the next bar relieves the wandering drinker of any stigma of discourtesy.

The fixed principle of all these exploits in drinking is that the drinker shall be virtually incapacitated as early as possible: that is, incapable of doing anything else with the same

single-hearted devotion he has given to imbibing liquor. One observes the principle in a pure form at the American cocktail party in Paris.

In that heathen city, gin and Scotch are expensive importations and the type American party goes in for them heavily. (I have no proof of the rumor that in response to public demand the Dêpot Nicolas has put in a line of bootleg gin, but the intent is the same. Out of deep loyalty to the abandoned mother country, the American in Paris tries to make his cocktail party as near the New York ideal as he can.) With the twilight gathering over the Café des deux Magots and the church so admirably placed across the street, with the soft air lying delicately over the boulevards and terraces, when Paris is beginning to slacken for the day and the trams and buses are heavily laden with

apparently agreeable people, the Americans foregather in large or small apartments and drink cocktails. Their conversation rises to the level of Long Island and Palm Beach: they talk about drink and business. They drink from six to nine; they get very drunk. And they go out to dinner, to restaurants where Frenchmen have cooked food, and fall over the table until they stumble away to drink liqueurs and watch the saucers mount on the little tables.

The New York party naturally combines the best elements of all of these and adds a few of its own. The beginning is identical: cocktails from five to seven-thirty. In the first half-hour, cocktails every five minutes; after that every ten for an hour and a half; after that, to top off the evening, every fifteen minutes: ten to

fifteen cocktails per drinking man or woman.

The disturbing element is the theater, for in spite of prejudiced commentators, the theaters of New York do, at times, attract the natives. Here are two hours virtually dry.[1]

One fortifies oneself against this unhappy interlude by going to a speakeasy to dine and one dashes to another, preferably a night club speakeasy if they still exist, directly after the

[1] Not, however, necessarily. The speakeasies have moved over and the intermissions are long. I would be churlish to omit the excellent bar which is open to every one, without a signed card, without previous acquaintance, without any questions. It is the back part of a shop dealing in — shall we say comestibles? — and all you need to do is to walk through the right door. My suspicion is that even if you do not identify the place from this description, you are fairly safe in pushing through any back door in any shop and trying your luck.

theater. The better way is to bring liquor to the club. Except for the misguided few who insist upon dancing or want to hear the show,[1] the party can now give itself unreservedly to drinking for three hours. Thereafter New York proves itself mistress of the art of living, for the law which closes all places of entertainment in the city at three o'clock does not close any place of entertainment in Harlem (which is in the city) at any time whatever. A trip to Harlem has therefore become the obligatory end of all good parties.

[1] There is at least one perfect dance orchestra now playing in a New York night club and one floor entertainer of the highest quality; the enjoyment of the latter is not increased by drunkenness, either on one's own part or on the part of any other patron.

A TRIP TO HARLEM, THE OBLIGATORY END
TO ALL GOOD PARTIES

The subject requires separate treatment — but not from me. The few good night clubs in Harlem are at their best between midnight and three o'clock. The sagging vitality, whipped up by drink, in the later hours are merely the further stretching of a spent rubber band.

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The visit to Harlem after a theater and a night club is not any proof of a great capacity for thrills or of a vast appetite for amusement. It is the active symptom of that phobia which led us in the first place to the party spirit: the fear of being alone. After the theater, at the very door of the night club going in, on the sidewalk of the same club going out, you may observe those who try to break away. Is it a premonition that thereafter the fun and spirit of the party will begin to flag? Or merely a

premonition of the morning after? On the first attempt the would-be deserter is surrounded and cajoled; later the deserter has to begin the obligatory quarrel with his or her companion, for husbands and wives, no more than lovers and mistresses, have learned the great trick of being drunk together, of desiring the same thing at the same time, of wanting to go or stay when the other wants to go or stay.

In this quarrel the drinking onlookers always side openly with the one who wishes to stay, but here and there you may catch a look of hidden encouragement for the deserter. A faint trace of envy lights up the weary eye.

A statue will yet be erected to the man who goes home when he wants to. The funds will be contributed by those who do not. The inscription will bear testimony to his courage and will

ON THE FIRST ATTEMPT THE WOULD-BE
DESERTER IS SURROUNDED AND CAJOLED

note with regret that in the hero's lifetime he was ostracized by the very friends who now pay him tribute.

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It is not enough, however, to depart. One must go without regrets. The uprising against the sacred drinker and the party spirit will not come until no one ever again asks the eternal question, "What happened after I left?"

All parties are what they are when we are with them, gay or tiresome, bright or mean. We enjoy our companions and quarrel over the proper distribution of the bill, carrying ourselves to peaks of generosity while we pay more than our share for fear of being thought close, and sighing with relief when some one ostentatiously wealthy declares that the party is on him. We breathe the rich air of our own

freedom or stifle in the miasma of the expansive personalities of others. These things vary; we sit by and experience them for what they are worth.

But the party which we leave midway is always good — after we leave. The party to which we were not asked or to which we could not come has always the bright light of success playing upon it. A dozen times a month we may go through the tedium of those long nights, but the next invitation finds us unconvinced. Perhaps something different, something more exciting and pleasurable will occur. We accept. We stay until we can bear no longer. And the next morning we telephone to be assured that we missed nothing.

Yet whatever we missed is alluring. That the usual quarrel took place, that one divorce and

one new alignment of lovers were arranged — we know with some certainty how we would have weathered these episodes. But hearing about them, we are saddened. We should have stayed. Yes, even if nothing happened, if the party died on its feet and broke into hostile fragments which even breakfast failed to reconcile, we should have been there. We have deserted.

The party spirit, then, is a powerful aid to the religion of drinking. Both of them assume that all the other functions and capacities and obligations of the normal man are to be discountenanced and drinking must hold its primary place.

I find myself committed to the statement that drinking is an end in itself and must tread

carefully, for wine in the ancient civilization which used it properly was always considered an essential accompaniment to other pleasures: love, conversation, the appreciation of some of the arts. And it is the annihilation of these other pleasures which has made drinking a tyranny in America. Yet if it is an end in itself —

Wine is an end if we take it for the qualities it possesses: for its taste and smell and body, for its ministering effects; if we drink it so long as drinking itself gives us pleasure. As soon as that happy moment passes, we are not drinking for love of liquor, but for the love of drunkenness. And drunkenness may be the end of drinking in two senses: if it is the end in the sense of goal, it is the end also in the sense of death.

The classic thinkers who despised specializa-

tion and preferred the complete man, the man who knew and experienced and enjoyed many things, none of them too well, agree with the modern psychologists who look for the entire pattern of a man's life, the balance of his various desires, the capacity to take many satisfactions. Against them the religion of drinking asserts that a man may not care for Bach and be willing to stop drinking at six o'clock because he wants to hear a concert at eight. It denies the right of any man to enjoy his bond selling, his book collecting (or reading), his squash games, his breakfast, his children — if his pleasure in any of these requires him to drink less. In this religion it is right to tear up the tickets to the season's single performance of Don Giovanni and it is not right to throw one of ten thousand identical drinks down the sink.

The heretic against the religion of drinking need therefore only assert, even plaintively, that once in a while he prefers to do something else. And if some one answers that drinking is, after all, still optional in America, he had better leave the company, for he is in the presence of the profoundest illusion of our time.

Drinking, in the drinking set, is not optional; it is compulsory. In the drinking set, I say, because obviously individuals and groups exist who occasionally take a drink or who never take a drink and these may even be numerous. But in well-defined groups where drinking is the custom, it tends to become obligatory. For the doubter, I offer the following questionnaire:

1. How often, in the past five years, have you been invited to any gathering of three or more people meeting after five o'clock, without expecting, and getting, strong drink?
2. How often, in the same circumstances, have you invited three or more people to any gathering without offering them liquor?
3. Have you ever found yourself in unfamiliar surroundings where liquor was not freely given? Did you mutter and take an oath never to reappear there?
4. Write down the names and addresses of all your intimate friends who do not habitually serve drink. On a separate sheet supplied for the purpose write down the names of all your friends who are spending more money than they can afford for liquor.
5. Give your own philosophical explanation

of the fact that the man who takes one or two cocktails before dinner when he is alone, or with a single companion, takes and offers fifteen to twenty when he is in a crowd. Establish the mathematical ratio between the numbers present and the number of drinks per person.

6. Recall, with whatever clarity you still possess, the number of occasions when you drank only what you wanted, as much as you wanted, where you wanted, and in the company you wanted. Recall the occasions when you drank in the opposite circumstances.
7. List the parties which ended happily. And the reverse.
8. Tell whether you enjoy the fighting (in which you do not participate) and the cry-

ing jags of your friends and the recriminations of lovers (married or not) and the confidences usually relating to sex of which you are made the recipient during a drinking party. Tell why you suffer these things.

9. State the conditions in which you have thoroughly enjoyed liquor; note the number of times you have disliked the taste of what you were drinking; say how often your happiness has been impaired (a) by events and personalities and (b) by the thought of the morrow.

10. Why do you drink?

Each of these questions count ten and the victim who answers truthfully, gets seventy or more, and still believes that drinking is voluntary, may consult his family physician, if

the physician happens to know anything about minor manias.

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Whoever, then, assembles twenty or thirty people to hear a string quartette may expect to answer, after the first number, the insistent question, "How about a little drink at this point?"

And may learn that whatever the ostensible purpose of any meeting of drinkers, the concealed purpose is drinking.

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It is only because divinity does lurk in wine that people of intelligence and taste hardly bring themselves to cut drinking off entirely. In the good stages of drinking, tongues are still loosed; but not Pentecostally.

I record the emergence of a new phenome-

non, the non-drinker through lack of conviction, the heretic against the religion of drinking who still has no traffic with the morbid dry. He is the man who has drunk, who still assists his friends to drink, but who will not drink again.

The new abstainer is, unlike the new drinker, not an evangelist. He may do little to solve the problems of Prohibition, but he has solved the parallel problem of drinking in the way suggested at the beginning of this investigation, — that is, personally. For not drinking, if one is not a fanatic, is as personal as drinking.

The mere fact that the heretic against the religion of drinking has already come into being gives us an indication of one possibility for the future. Heretics are protestants against

dominant cults; in the present instance you find the heretic only in urban centers and their shore or mountain retreats; he is, that is to say, in rebellion against a religion which is tyrannical only over small groups. But these groups are always seeking and gaining converts; they have an entire generation which has no experience of sobriety to work on.

It is therefore quite possible that drinking will become the established religion of America. I do not think this will happen, but logically nothing stands in the way. No child born after 1920 will have any choice except that which lies between fanatic dryness and fanatic drinking and it is as easy to believe that he will choose one as the other. Or easier.

We might as well be warned in advance that if drinking becomes the official religion of

America, a great deal of nonsense will be offered in explanation. Drinking will be adored as the only escape from the machine. For Mr. Ford, in his strange way, is right. Just as he was right when he said that history is bunk, meaning history as he knew it, so he is right in defining the eternal hostility between drink and the machine age — drink as prohibition America knows it and the machine age as America has made it.

The machine age wants precision and control and mastery; drink wants soft contours, a free hand, and escape. But we are justified, before the choice is made, in being precise about the alternative. It is perhaps escape from slavery to the machine that drink offers, but the bold spirits who take to liquor are not robots. They are superior fellows. And what they are

escaping is not slavery, but the necessity of mastering the machine.

We shall hear, no doubt, that the monotony and standardization of life in America demand the accidental, the unexpected, as a foil. As nothing is more standardized than the stages of a drinking party, the argument is a little weak to begin with; and as the life of the non-drinker begins to take on various unexpected and newly discovered pleasures with the leisure which emancipation from the drinking ritual brings, the argument remains feeble to the end. In the middle lies the great unproved assumption that life in America is monotonous and standardized. We have for this only the word of critics (even when critics turn novelist) who put disagreeable names on the things they dislike. Main Street itself lives in the illusion of

feverish change, excitement and gaiety. It may be morbid, but it is not moribund.

In brief, the religion of drinking as a revenge against America is unacceptable. For drinking is only acceptable when it is done for — and gives pleasure in — itself.

CHAPTER VI

SILENUS AND APOLLO

"When any desire is denied for the sake of another," says Mr. I. A. Richards in one of the essential books of our time, not generally so recognized because it is titled "The Principles of Literary Criticism," "the approved and accepted activity takes on additional value; it is coveted and pursued all the more for what it cost. Thus the spectacle of other people enjoying both activities without difficulty, thanks to some not very obvious adjustment, is peculiarly distressing, and such people are usually regarded as especially depraved."

As, for instance, the ascetic. He has put away lust because it corrupts love — the love of

Christ or the love of his fellowmen; and while he may understand the libertine, he cannot forgive the moderate sensual man who enjoys both love and lust; he has rejected the world because he wishes to attain the peace of God and to justify himself must believe that godliness cannot exist in the world. Or the fanatic dry: we assume too easily that he does not drink because he loathes all joy; we must be generous enough to assume that he has foresworn drinking in favor of the pleasure, greater to him, of the rigorous Christian life. But because the desire to drink is innate, because he has sacrificed it, the Christian life loses a little of its purity — it is not only an ideal, but a weapon as well. To be happy in it, he has to assume that whoever does drink is not good. He cannot tolerate that "not very obvious adjustment" by which

some men are both drinkers and Christians.

And, since psychological principles are not erected to cover single cases, the man who has denied himself any of the other pleasures of life, in order to be more completely drunken, cannot tolerate the adjusted individual who can be both sober and drunk. The habitual dry is a fanatic, like himself, and these two embrace one another in mortal combat, each understanding the temper and the fury of the other; the enemy of both is the man whose system can tolerate and combine the virtues of both of the others. He has been called the moderate drinker; in other fields he appears as the humanist,[1] the civilized man, the one who makes

[1] To avoid controversy, let me say that this has no reference to "neo-humanists." What these emergent philosophers feel about drinking, I do not know.

the best of both worlds. It is rather good form to despise him.

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The reason for the low opinion in which this man is held is that he is, actually, the great enemy of romanticism: romanticism about sobriety and romanticism about drunkenness. He is a realist, and he knows that both of these extremes are exaggerated natural functions of the human being, insisting that no supreme moral value attaches to either, except in relation to the whole activity of man. He is that thorn in the flesh of all romantic moralists (who may call themselves religious men or æsthetes and remain moralists all the same) — the man who knows what a balloon looks like when it is deflated. He knows that moral systems are often the overblown physical prejudices, the

private ambitions, the revenges, of angry and powerful or cowed and impotent individuals. He knows that in order to impose itself, a desire must be erected into a religion; but he rejects the legend of divinity with which the religion surrounds itself.

Is it likely that the future of drinking will rest in such indifferent hands?

For he is indifferent, this man, to everything but the privilege of drinking when he wants to. He has seen his moderation and his tolerance inflated into a principle, a theory, and a religion, and found the anti-fanatics as intolerant and fanatical as their enemies. He has seen "personal liberty" drop from the exhausted hands of the brewers into the active warfare of the anti-drys, and he knows that the moment he organizes himself, he is lost. Yet he is the best

drinker in the world, because he neither drinks nor stops drinking under compulsion. Constitutional law and social pressure leave him unmoved; he will not drink as a protest against the bitterness of the world nor stop as a tribute to its power. He likes his liquor.

His single enemy is phylloxera. He suspects that all wines made since that foul disease ravaged the vineyards of France are a little off in quality. They remain the only great wines; but just as the vital stock of men and women has been corrupted of its innocence by the disease which the Crusades or Columbus brought back to Europe, so the stock of the grape may have been irremediably hurt by the pestilence. It is a small comfort to patriotic Americans to know that when the French vineyards were threat-

ened with total extinction, they were saved by grafts from the grapes of California, French themselves in provenance, but roughened in our Western soil. It is possible that only the very old, and those whose cellars held ancient vintages, have ever tasted French wines in all their purity.

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It is useless to suppose that the multiplication a hundred thousand times over of the non-professional drinkers in America would persuade the drys to remit their rigor by a single degree. This drinker has, therefore, no political virtue, and even if he resents the urgency of the drinkers by vocation, he is fundamentally on their side. For he knows that drunkenness is a great pleasure. All he asks is that it be allowed to remain one.

"I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I LEFT?"

He may be a man of no complexes and few troubles, but to him as to the most knotted and thwarted of drinkers, wine is the true *aqua regia,* the divine solvent. The color of wine, for which the Greeks found a perfect analogy in the mysterious sea, happens not to be the chosen color of sin or revelry; it is not, in effect, gay — it is only rich. And the power of wine has also this strange quality of separation from the excessive. For whatever else is taken to excite or dull the senses will give visions of unearthly and supernatural things, but the illusions of wine remain basically human. In certain stages of wine we may see more clearly than usual, but we see the accustomed things; we may see double, but the two of a kind we see are usually human kind. With the visions of drugs the clairvoyance of wine has nothing on earth to do.

The social institution of which drinking was the firm foundation has virtually passed away: the Saturday-night drunk. Against it were ranked two powerful forces, the upholders of the Blue Sunday and the mechanists who feared the shaking hand and the unclear eye in the factory on Monday. The millhand or clerk who shook from himself the double tyranny of shop and home when he entered the saloon on Saturday night was giving himself a physical and psychological release and the moralists and the mechanists were quite right in trying to deny it to him. After all, they were not thinking of him as an individual, but as a function in producing motor cars or in glorifying their God. The fact that a man worked better after (some time after) a drunk and was a kinder and richer man did not concern them, since they

did not want him to be kind and rich, and they could always get men who did not lapse of a Monday.

These deniers of the week-end riot were of the same fiber as those who thought anæsthesia in childbirth to be a defiance of God's laws and wishes. They were convinced that it is wrong for a man to seek release, even momentarily, from the predicament of living. Release the drunkard got, even if he landed in jail; he lived for a few hours in a different life and took refreshment from it; in those hours he was a changed man.

The price was less than the fees of a psychoanalyst, and the effect, on the whole, more desirable.

CHAPTER VII

"FAR AS HUMAN EYE CAN SEE . . ."

It is not an accident that the spree forms the connecting link between the remote past and the distant future. It is a vulgar form of drinking; it is related to good drinking as taking drugs is related to the medical use of narcotics; but it may be the only form of drinking to survive.

The catharsis, the confession, the release brought by the spree will probably remain essential to the average human male.[1]

[1] In his admirable and thoroughly wrong-headed book on Tragedy, F. L. Lucas says, "The truth is that we do

A concealed value of the spree was that it concentrated drinking "where it did the most good." On the whole, the spree-man was not much a mid-week drinker; he was certainly not a mid-week drunkard. We think of the spree as the night out of stevedores, truck drivers, steel workers — heavy men, rough men, men who could stand punishment; the

not go back to Aristotle so much for the right answers as for the right questions." I moderate my ambition to be the Aristotle of the tragedy of drinking, but it occurs to me that a few right questions are desirable at this point:

What took the place of the week-end spree for the American wife and mother?

Was the spree unnecessary for women because they were less the victims of the machine age?

Or less the victims of domesticity, of which they were the masters?

truth is that the rigors of their jobs, or some "adjustment," made it impossible or unnecessary for them to drink heavily during the week. What is more, the religion of drunkenness did not exist in their time.

In a spirit of pure materialism, we now conceive that the average healthy man can no longer stand the amount of drinking which the new religion imposes upon him. Drinking, be-

Was the spree, then, largely a rebellion against the doubtful supremacy of the American female (in which I do not passionately believe)?

I do not know "right answers" to these, to me, absorbing questions. The reader will note that one question is omitted: Will the spree become part of the equipment for life of the American women? The reason for the omission is purely technical, as the persistent reader will find both question and answer in these now rapidly concluding pages.

come customary (to the point of duty) on all occasions, begins to afford release of complexes before the complexes are formed; in the Aristotelian phrase, we have catharsis when there is nothing to be purged away and the effect is singularly like the third day of seasickness.

This average drinking man, the half-conscious victim of the new order, still has an office, a job. He has, in accordance with the American commercial system, a routine to follow, and in most cases the routine demands his presence out of bed by nine o'clock. It demands a moderately clear head and a hand capable of signing a document. I happen not to like this routine and to be among the happy few who escape from it; I quite see that a sort of defiant drinking may help to make the routine tolerable. But the agonies and the desperate expedi-

ents of my friends persuade me that so long as business exists, drinking is a dangerous occupation. That is, drinking as now practised, drinking until three in the morning, drinking of bad liquor — Prohibition drinking, in brief.

As soon as the drinker has to count the cost in terms of the next day, the pure ecstasy of drinking is corrupted. But religions are absolutes in these days, and uncompromising, and the martyr who counts the cost is lost to sainthood. It becomes, then, a simple matter of choosing between being a business man and being a drunkard. In America the choice must fall for many years on the side of business.

That is to say, even if intelligence does not break down the religion of drunkenness, industry will. And we have to look for the future

THE RELEASE BROUGHT BY THE SPREE WILL PROBABLY REMAIN ESSENTIAL TO THE AVERAGE HUMAN MALE

of drinking to the class or classes least touched by industrialism.

Enter Madame.

Ten years of steady drinking have not taught the drinking woman how to drink well and how not to be a pest to the men with whom she is drinking. To these men she remains the one unsolved problem of Prohibition; I doubt whether many of them see in her their only permanent link with liquor.

The political and industrial emancipation of women came more or less at the same time as the enslavement of men and women alike to the tyranny of non-drinking. But too much must not be made of the coincidence. It is not especially the women workers who are the women drinkers.

We had better look into the centuries during which women did not drink, particularly the nineteenth century in America, when drinking and rouge were the signs of the courtesan. It is clear enough that nearly every step in the emancipation of women is a step toward the free position of the anciently named "abandoned woman." The maternalists after Ellen Key and the rigid moralists deny this and reject any idea of achieving financial independence through their sex attractions; but they want to be sexually free and financially independent and the two things ("in a man-made world") often work together.

Behind them lies the dark century of suppression, a present memory, and the drinking of women to-day is a long revenge for the dominance, in drink, of the male. That a

drunken woman is unprepossessing, that she is unpredictable and a burden to her companion, that the ancient struggle against the female is resumed every time a man sees a woman in liquor, matter little to her. Far beyond the pleasure she has in the drink is the pleasure she has in turning the tables — upsetting them, even — on the once uniquely drinking male.

I implied, just now, that drinking would naturally become one of the occupations of the leisure class. Without offices and obligations, that class can and no doubt will devote itself to drinking. And concurrently this implies the dominance of women, who will remain at leisure for some time to come, in the business of drinking.

Drinking, however, was once universal, the

right and the habit of the workingman; and part of his pleasure in life was to return, in any stage of drunkenness, to a sober and even adoring spouse.

It is unlikely that the sober male, kept sober by the needs of his job, by his physical incapacity to be drunken, will meekly await the return of his hilarious mate. The superiority of the drunkard is, in love, too evident. And it is obvious that the succeeding step, after drinking becomes the exclusive property of women, is the revolt of the male.

For a time, men will drink in self-defence. They may distrust women, their own women, and prefer to be in their company when the thunderbolt of great drunkenness strikes, so that, if a woman ever does go home, she will,

in nine out of ten cases, go to her own home. This counter-drinking can have no good effects on marital relations, for the man will of necessity remain a little more sober than his wife or mistress and will observe her with the rancor of one sitting by while others are enjoying life. His comparative clarity of vision can do little to keep up the glamour of a common life. Women, for a generation or two, will infuriate men because men will never understand why liquor affects them as it does — that is to say, never twice in the same way. The average man who is accustomed to taking a boon companion home after a party knows exactly at what point the companion will become friendly, at what point friendliness will turn to self-pity, and so on through the list to belligerency and the final pass-out. About

women, even if he has drunk with them for years, he knows nothing. To them, liquor is lightning; it strikes perhaps in the same place, but never in the same way.

The dominance of women, predicted by Sunday-supplement sociologists fourteen times a year, will follow, not from their superior intelligence, but from their freedom to go on drinking when men have stopped.

They can, however, go on drinking only so long as they remain economically dependent — that is, persons of leisure. In the shivering cold of his sobriety, the irritated male must eventually recognize the relationship and eventually take steps. The obligatory step is to make women as much slaves to the industrial system as men are.

Each man will have to impose upon the women of his entourage the same conditions of

life which have ruined himself as a drinker, in order to be sheltered from the excessive joys, the intense excitations, and the longer and more appalling languors of his sweethearts and wives.

Happily for him, he will be following the natural curve of economic progress. In Russia and in Detroit, the equality of men and women goes from theory into practice. The process will be long. For a time we shall reverse the condition of the past century and have drinking women ruling over sober men, a singular matriarchy. In the end, equality in drinking will be met by equality in working, and the second will destroy the first.

And yet I should hardly like to predict that the future of drinking is no drinking at all. The stages I have outlined: compulsory drunk-

enness under the new religion, heretical sobriety, the spree, the defeat of the male drinker, the rise of the woman drinker, the revolt of the male compelling the woman to stop drinking by making her go to work — all these point to the elimination of drinking, at best to its concentration in a few hands. The leisure class will still drink. Like polo and yachting, drinking will remain a special attribute of great wealth. It will be another manifestation of conspicuous waste and in the end a generation will arise which has known no liquor and will look on it as an odd perversion of the, by that time, unnecessary leisure class.

When the dispensability of the leisure class becomes too marked, we may have a revolution . . .

To speak of a revolution in America is, of course, such an extreme of fantasy that it makes everything else one says of doubtful value. You cannot take seriously any prediction which in any way involves an overturn of that most fundamental of our institutions, the rich.

Perhaps it would be as well then to canvass the alternative: we will all become rich and all remain drinkers. It would be a pretty irony. For it is the work of the engineers which is destroying our capacity to drink and nothing would be more delightful than to have the engineers emancipate us — from themselves — and set us free to drink again.

"*Turn Down an* Empty *Glass.*"

— THE RUBAIYAT

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